



**California State Legislature Rural Caucus**

The California State Legislature Rural Caucus (Rural Caucus) currently consists of 43 members representing both houses of the Legislature and both political parties. The Rural Caucus was revitalized in January 2003 by Assemblymember Dave Cogdill and Senator Chuck Poochigian to protect and promote rural California and its interests.

Since revitalization in January 2003, the Rural Caucus has focused on the following goals:

- Provide a mechanism for rural residents and organizations to carry their concerns and needs to the California State Legislature.
- Serve as a voice for rural communities by conducting research and analysis on legislation and providing this information to Caucus members, other legislators, and the Governor’s office, as deemed appropriate.
- Generate support for, and understanding of, rural issues for Caucus members, other legislators, and constituents, utilizing town halls, summits, and seminars on policy issues impacting rural California.
- Foster partnerships with key stakeholder organizations working on behalf of rural residents and communities.
- Serve as a liaison between the Governors’s Office and the Legislature to develop and coordinate rural policy development.

**Members of the Rural Caucus**

<b>Assembly</b>	Sharon Runner
Greg Aghazarian	Simón Salinas
Juan Arambula	Audra Strickland
John Benoit	Mike Villines
Patty Berg	Mimi Walters
Sam Blakeslee	Lois Wolk
Russ Bogh	Fabian Núñez (Honorary)
Dave Cogdill	
Noreen Evans	<b>Senate</b>
Bonnie Garcia	Sam Aanestad
Ray Haynes	Roy Ashburn
Guy S. Houston	Wes Chesbro
Rick Keene	Dave Cox
Doug La Malfa	Jeff Denham
Jay La Suer	Denise Moreno Ducheny
John Laird	Bob Dutton
Tim Leslie	Dean Florez
Barbara Matthews	Dennis Hollingsworth
Bill Maze	Mike Machado
Kevin McCarthy	Abel Maldonado
Dennis Mountjoy	Charles Poochigian
Alan Nakanishi	George Runner
Joe Nation	Dick Ackerman (Honorary)
Nicole Parra	Don Perata (Honorary)

**Officers of the Rural Caucus**

Assemblymember Dave Cogdill (R-Modesto), Chair  
Senator Denise Moreno Ducheny (D-San Diego), Vice Chair  
Assemblymember Greg Aghazarian (R-Stockton), Secretary

*The next election of officers is slated for March 2005.*

**Staff Support**

Effective Spring 2004, Rural Caucus Chairman Cogdill successfully secured outside funding for a research and policy analyst position from the California Endowment in coordination with the CSU Sacramento Center for California Studies. The California Endowment is a private, statewide health foundation that awards grants to organizations that directly benefit the health and well-being of the people of California.

Ms. Peggy B. Wheeler assists all members of the Rural Caucus by monitoring legislation, conducting research, and providing analyses of relevant issues that impact individuals, families, and communities in rural California.

A Voice for  
**Rural California**



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**Budget Victories**

Each year during State budget negotiations, members of the Rural Caucus work diligently to advocate for issues that will continue to enhance and protect the quality of life in rural California.

**2003**

- Protected current funding and secured additional funding for methamphetamine prevention in the Central Valley.
- Fought to reduce burdensome fees on agricultural industry.
- Maintained funding for incentives for biomass energy producers to burn agricultural waste providing for much cleaner air.
- Eliminated a fee on timber harvesting that would have threatened the viability or solvency of timber companies and negatively impacted the economies of rural California.
- Amended various pieces of air quality legislation to decrease their negative impacts on the agriculture industry, while cleaning the air in the Central Valley.
- Amended agricultural waiver discharge legislation to make it less burdensome on agriculture while maintaining clean water.
- Prevented the elimination of the Williamson Act agriculture tax exemption.

**2004**

- Reinstated Rural and Small County Law Enforcement Grant Program.
- Repealed State Responsibility Area (SRA) fees, a duplicative property tax that unfairly burdened rural parts of the State.
- Secured \$70 million in funding for Rural Health Clinics (RHCs) and Federally Qualified Health Centers (FQHCs), increasing their ability to provide primary care services to the state’s most medically underserved populations.
- Continued funding for Rural Health Care Equity Program to provide reimbursement for out-of-pocket health care costs incurred by State employees and retirees living in rural areas that are not served by HMOs.
- Allocated additional funding to the Carl Moyer Program for replacing or rebuilding heavy-duty diesel engines with new clean-technology engines, thereby reducing emissions of smog-forming pollutants and helping to reduce health care costs for Californians.
- Eliminated timber harvest fee that would have severely threatened the viability or solvency of timber companies and impacted the economies of rural California.
- Ensured \$5.1 million for Rural Municipal airports construction, maintenance, and security upgrades that will be matched with \$100 million in Federal money.
- Ensured additional funding to help combat West Nile Virus.

**Legislative Victories**

Rural Caucus representation in the California Legislature ensures a voice for rural communities and Rural Caucus members authored and/or supported passage of legislation addressing critical issues in their constituent communities.

**2004**

- **Assembly Bill 923** protects funding for the Carl Moyer program.
- **Assembly Bill 2706** delivers more federal grant funds earmarked for technology projects to smaller Northern California school districts.
- **Assembly Bill 2758** continues funding for the California Teleconnect Fund which provides discounted rates to qualifying schools, libraries, hospitals, health clinics, and community organizations.
- **Assembly Bill 1963** encourages the use of *promotores de salud* and community health workers to provide better health outcomes for rural and underserved communities through the various public health programs.
- **Senate Bill 260** authorizes the California Department of Corrections (CDC) and Health Care Districts to create regional Inmate Health Service Joint Powers Agencies (JPAs) which, if fully utilized, could help reduce inmate health care costs by an estimated \$20,000,000 annually.
- **Senate Bill 1276** continued the State Public Utilities Commission (PUC) High Cost Fund programs which provide affordable and equitable basic telephone service in rural and remote areas.

**Educational Events**

The Rural Caucus has sponsored and/or cosponsored numerous events since its inception to foster better understanding of rural issues within rural communities and among urban and rural legislators and state government representatives.

• **Bi-Annual Rural Education Summit (1999 - 2005)**

This statewide event, begun by former Senator Montiet and Assemblyman Cardoza, covers issues that pertain to the unique needs of rural schools including, but not limited to: implementation of “No Child Left Behind”, transportation costs, class size reduction, school facilities, declining enrollment, and access to quality teachers.

• **Rural Caucus Annual meeting with the Governor (2004-2005)**

Rural Caucus members convene an annual meeting with the Governor to provide information on Caucus membership and activities, offer resources and expertise regarding rural issues, and invite the Administration’s participation in Rural Caucus events.

• **Annual Legislative Natural Resources Tour (2002 - 2004)**

The tour is designed to allow urban legislators to learn first hand about rural areas and the struggles they face to maintain economic development and healthy forests.

• **Annual Natural Resources Summit (2002 - 2005)**

The summit features various forestry and agricultural experts who address current natural resource issues surrounding forest preservation and protection in rural California.

• **CSRHA Annual Conference (2003 - 2005)**

The Rural Caucus collaborates with the California State Rural Health Association (CSRHA) in conducting their annual rural health conference.

• **Public Safety Town Hall Series (2003- 2005)**

These successful educational and informational town halls are conducted in rural districts statewide to educate citizens on how to protect children in school, prevent identification theft, and fight crime in our rural communities.

• **Rural Health Legislative Workshop Series (2004 - 2005)**

CSRHA and the Rural Caucus hosted a series of three educational workshops for Rural Caucus members and their staff, government representatives, and rural leaders throughout the state to address

priority issues for improving the health of rural communities in California.

• **Rural Communities Day at the Capitol (2004)**

Rural Caucus members participated in this event held in conjunction with the CSRHA sponsored Rural Health Workshop.

• **Central California Rural Roundtable (2004)**

The inaugural meeting attracted almost 50 Central California rural organizations. The goals of the Central Region Rural Roundtable are to improve access and outreach to quality healthcare for the Central Region through a collaborative approach and to improve and expand the workforce, including specialist providers.

• **Colorado River Seminar (2003)**

This educational seminar was held in the State Capitol. Speakers discussed issues surrounding the statewide impact of the Quantification Settlement Agreement that apportions water from the Colorado River. This event was open to all California State Legislators and staff.

• **Agricultural Pumping Efficiency Program (2003)**

This program is an educational and incentive rebate program intended to improve overall pumping plant efficiency and encourage energy conservation. This program, sponsored by Center for Irrigation Technology at California State University, Fresno, was taken to agricultural areas throughout California and is open to users of agricultural electric or natural gas pumps.

• **Central Valley and Sierra Nevada Health Care Summit (2002)**

This meeting was held in Fresno and was hosted by Senator Chuck Poochigian and Assemblyman Dave Cogdill. This event was attended by over 350 rural health care leaders and concerned citizens. The summit addressed these four health care issues: nurse shortages, medical reimbursement rates, escalating cost of prescription drugs and rural access to HMO’s.

• **Regional Mini Health Care Summits (2002)**

As a follow-up to the highly successful Central Valley and Sierra Nevada Health Care Summit, these events continued the discussion of innovative constructive ways to solve key rural health issues.